

Interviewee: **John Newsome**
Interviewers: **Ernest Demby, Julie Hawkins-Ennis, Linda Moore-Garoute, Noah Waters, Ryan Craun**
Date of Interview: **January 23, 2020**
Location of Interview: **Eagle Harbor Community Center, Eagle Harbor, MD**
List of Acronyms: **JN=John Newsome, RD=Robert Davis, HD=Harold Bryant**
ED=Ernest Demby, JE=Julie Hawkins Ennis, LG=Linda Moore-Garoute
NW=Noah Waters, RC=Ryan Craun

[Begin Transcript: 00:27]

ED: Let start off with your name, sir?

JN: My name is John Newsome. I live here in Cedar Haven, right next to Eagle Harbor. I've been living here for about four years now but, I bought a place down here, it has been about 15,16 years. After I retired I decided to move down to the place. 20 years before that, I used to worked at the Pepco Plant up here. I use to come down to... well I found the place of going down, fishing down in Cedar Haven, planting oysters and just enjoying it, hunting and everything. Knowing some people here in Aquasco, friends and stuff, I used to take them back and forth to school. Everything in the area was black folks. It was really nice coming down, people waved like down in the country. People would wave, speak and everything and I thought it was a really nice place. So, I'd said after I retire, I would move down here, and that's what I did.

ED: How is it doing with you so far?

JN: Well, everything is fine. Except for the fishing is not like it used to be. Things have been a little different. A lot of different people when coming down, they do what you don't want them to be doing. Just throwing stuff around, leave everything on the beach and stuff like that. We've been picking up stuff and trying to keep it like it should be, and we haven't gotten that yet, so I think a lot of fishing has been changed. The crabs are much smaller, and I guess that's with the Chesapeake Bay, and all around too. But this little particular area down here, its quiet, and I wish it could stay that way.

ED: What would you like to see if there was some things to restore for the elements of this area?

JN: Probably some sort of security, gate or something. You've gone into some of the gated areas and you have a code that you could punch in, and you can bring your family down, and neighbors and stuff that could come down. Then somehow, get this river dredged out and cleaned up so the fish would come back and be a nice area for someone to really live in and just come and visit.

ED: How do you feel about... like the historical places that are still here?

JN: A lot of them just need fixing. I don't think it should be a whole lot of four and five story homes to put to put down here. It would be great if they just left it like it is but just restore the place. Make them look like waterfront properties and everybody worked together to get the area upgraded, it would be nice.

ED: Right. We've done quite few interviews and I've gathered from most of the people down here that this is a very tight knit area. You spoke on putting a gate up. Do you think that's the main element around here? Sort of like a privacy that everybody has and that they cherish this area really...

JN: Well, I think the people that's been here and the one that moved down here, they love the place. So therefore, they don't want everything from everywhere coming here and just doing anything. Because I know, over Cedar Haven, you used to go down on the beach and you could just swim and enjoy yourself. You go down there now and swim, you probably cut your feet open with beer bottles or something that somebody that threw out and left out there. So when I say to gated thing, not trying to keep everybody out or anything like that, but just have respect for people that are coming down here that are going to do what they are supposed to do. That's what I think it should be like.

ED: Kindness

JN: Yes

ED: Like a threshold that you are entering another place.

JN: Exactly

ED: To show respect, I understand. You brought up fishing, are those like your fondest memories of this area?

JN: I think more so the... the fishing and stuff. Because I used to bring kids from D.C. I used to come down and bring them down, we used to camp out in the yard. And then I would take them down to fish. They could walk out there and run their feet down in the sand and find oysters to picking up and they taught it was the greatest thing in the world. I also have a garden, big garden and I let the kids come down and teach them how to plant. You'd be surprised, they just lied up when they see. "Look what I've done". This thing have grown tomatoes. I like to keep it that way that you could do that without having people complaining that you have a garden or something like that. That's the best memories. The hunting is okay. But then, we are getting all kinds of people coming down and just shooting up everything. Don't want that. Respectful people coming and going hunting and follow the rules is what it should be like. Not just anybody come in, rents a spot and they shoot up everything that moves. It's crazy.

ED: I understand. You brought up something that I don't think anybody has really taking a dive into. And that's the younger people?

JN: Yes

ED: Do you think that this area... like you said gardening and things. Do you think this area is a place where it's a good experience for younger people?

JN: Definitely. Any place you have some property or a land that would grow something is a place that you can get the kids from the inner city and bring them down and teach them things that they would never get up there. They see concrete they see shooting. All kinds of craziness. Bring them somewhere and show them that look, You can grow stuff, you can do stuff. And once they complete something, and look back and see its growing, you see their face just light up. And that's grown-up's too, because they don't know a lot of stuff about growing stuff, either. But it could be nice with the right people handling stuff, it could be nice.

ED: Understood. I guess that's...

JE: Well I was going to say, what you brought to mind for me is that this area is significant when it comes to just being natural land and it could grow fruits and vegetables. The wate. So you wanted it to be cleaned up,

so you could continue to do that because that's what you would like to see.

JN: Definitely. The river especially, because without the river, being cleaner and having something to attract people that would want to come here. Who would want to come here and step on a bottles and stuff or see that floating around? Who wants to come and fish and you know you're not going to catch anything? But if the river is cleaned up, the fish is going to come. Because this Patuxent river runs all the way around to Solomon's Island. The Chesapeake Bay runs right to it and runs all the way to Bowie. This way. All the way to Bowie. There's all kinds of fishing and stuff. I've followed the river as far as I could go and had to call my brother to bring the truck to get me because there's no way I could have come back that far. It is nice if you just follow it all the way around. And it's something a lot of people should be able... that they don't even know. Even the people here, they don't know that.

JE: Do you think the plant has anything to do with the pollution in here?

JN: No. I've worked at the plant there. A lot of place that you see foam and stuff coming out of some them and stuff like that. But this one, I don't think it has anything to do with it. Lunch time, I used to go down and rod around the water and I used to catch Rockfish, right here. About 28, 38 inches, I mean huge Rockfish. And the water is warm that is coming out of there. So they are spawning there now, but Rockfish are not going to stay in polluted water. And the crap that's coming from this way when the tide is going out, these fish are going to go out too. Right now, you could go out there, go out in the sand, run your foot down, you're not going to find any horst's. You go out in the water and go far up until it get up about you're here (neck), then you might find one. So, they left the shallow waters which you could feel all the time. Just reach them and pick them up. It was really nice.

JE: Anymore questions?

NW: We talked about the young youth in the community not being involved in the community. What do you think are some of the, some ways to attract youth involvement?

JN: The one's here, or?

NW: Those who are connected to, maybe have property. Property passed down to them.

JN: A lot of the place could be set-up that... first of all, what are you formed to do? What do they want to do. You find out what they want to do. And a lot of them like the dirt bikes or whatever. If there's a property or enough area where they can ride dirt bikes in that designed area, they would love to come down and do that. Four wheelers and stuff like that, but in a designed area, but not flying up and down the streets. And, at a certain time, you have to stop. If they can't abide by the rules, well. It needs some kind of way you can say "Look, you can't do it unless you abide by the rules". Certain times because people like to sleep. They're here to relax and enjoy themselves not to hear stuff going all night long. You find out what the kids like to do, and someone to, like a nature center or something. All kids like nature. And there is plenty of that here. Have somebody that can just show them around. Let them know what's going on. Let them know what this is, what that is, what this can do. It needs somebody that can do that and that would attract kids and make them want to be here and do things.

RD: What I can say to you about Eagle Harbor is, I was connected with [12:11], and I brought a bunch of children down here and they was little fascinated about the Eagles. To what it's called, Eagle Harbor, they have never actually seen an Eagle in person. They only see that in movies. I was surprised to see this big bird coming down in a bunch and they were talking about that for a long time. There were so many different things

as far as here to see, as far as just the word itself, but the birds... just beautiful. And that's [12:43], just closed to Washington DC. You don't see anything like that Eagle. I don't see like that until I came down here. Just closed to Washington DC.

JN: Explain to those down here. As a matter of fact, right outside there's this big tower and every year I watched these Eagles. They have families up and everybody, I bring my grandkids down and they're amazed. They are amazed by the birds. But believe it or not, I think not just kids, anybody. When you got the waterfront like this that clean, that nice, without that a whole lot of craziness going on, they would love to come here. They will bring their kids and they will enjoy. And especially if you got people here they would explain the history of this place, and what's going on and why you keep your places this particular way instead of having, like if you go over here and [13:41], that they build all these condo's, all up and down the water. Nobody want that craziness. You should by the way have an apartment building and stay up in DC or wherever. Just leave it like it is and enjoy the surrounding. The nature and stuff, they would love it.

JE: What is the history...

JN: There's a slave... well, there are slaves somewhere places over here. As a matter of fact, the house next to me was one of the main houses, I guess the slave-master was there, there's a big house with the porch closing and porch going away around the house. Right now... Mr. Davis.

JE: Do you know the name?

JN: I am trying to think of his name... Mr. Williams. He have it now. He have the place now and I've been talking to him because I do not want him to sell this to some *weirdo*, I want to buy the place from him. It's right next to my house.

JE: What street is it on?

JN: Frederick Douglas.

JE: One's with Cedar Haven sign.

JN: Yes

JE: Because all those streets are named after a prominent athlete.

JN: Exactly. And I don't know all the history, it's just a lot. I started looking into some of that stuff, which I didn't know there was a case down here. That's why those little small house was all what they are because they had the slaves stayed on some of those places. And they still look like, something like that over there. It's amazing.

ED: This area seems to be very rich and a lot of different things. Nature, history, like you said I think that would be a great idea to use those things to make this place...

JN: Definitely. You don't want to destroy something that's been going on a hundred years ago. Why destroy it? Learn and benefit from it.

JE: I think the... [15:48]

ED: That is a beautiful idea.

JN: Yes

JE: Nobody said that.

JN: Because right behind my house I think it's, it might be a thousand acres behind my house. They go all away back up in the woods, no houses. There was a club back in the day, old club. And it's still, I can't get the name... I don't know what it is now. But it's still there because I've gone up in there and sit-up on the bricks' and stop hunting because it got all kinds of valleys back then.

NW: Who owns the property?

JN: I'm not sure. Last week I was trying to talk a guy, Mr. Thomas said that he would take me down to county so I could get plucks, so I could see who owns all the stuff around here because I would like to keep it like it is. And if I know somebody down here that would do that in the property and come up for sale (yes), I would let him know.

NW: It seems that people consistently describing is similar to Williamsburg, they keep it.

JN: Exactly

NW: They keep it their identity from the period, and I see these as many Williamsburg. And when it come up to conversations, is a part of businesses for young. Because to me, I don't know if I'm hitting up on anything, but to least it would be economy, because to attract young people a lot of times... I don't know if you feel that they need to have sometime of economy to make money, sources of revenue.

JE: Well, when you look at it that way, you're talking about bringing a lot of stores. You don't need that.

NW: No, Williamsburg.

JN: I thought you are talking about to build up businesses.

NW: The Williams, they have little little shops. They have museums, they have... it's all period.

JN: Food, drinks and stuff. I've been there.

HB: Mr. Waters, [17:55], and that is, when it needs to happen here is, one of the main things that needs to happen here is a museum, and that is another way of preserving your culture and your history. And that can also serve as you've said (Barry Jose Campbell), as a little [18:13], you can serve you can sell blow horns. You can sell when people come in here to enjoy themselves. You can use that as a return of revenue and things that in nature. But, a key aspect to to that is a museum. That needs to happen.

JN: Well, that little store right up there in corner there, they did just exactly that back in the day. That little store now, it was like a general store. You got your flower, you got this and this. Bacon, milk and stuff like that. They sell worms there and everything. I tried to get that store, but the guy...

JE: And what street is that on?

JN: That's right on, it's a low block place right there at the lobe turn. And if you suggest to get up... well, we used to get up at 12 o'clock and go over there, the guys closed maybe around 1 o'clock. Buy candy and stuff, we go back and do whatever we want to do. And that would be nice to get a little store like that. And then, around you got everybody with blondes and stuff like that. Maybe we get some kind of little landmark shop or something that would take care the people in the area. The kids... if the person that have that don't mind if there are kids living here, showing this kids... look, "Learn how to repair this small engines because if you can do that, there's no place in the world you can't go and make a living." And it's not. "If you can fix small engines lan mores, snow blowers, mini bikes, go carts, you can go any place in the world and make a living." Because every place you go, they got those things. And a learning center that could attract people to come. You want to get a hands on training? Go down to Eagle Harbor and talked to these people. Take a couple of kids, take them down and train them how to do that, it would bring revenue to the place too.

JE: What else I see, because I'm from St. Mary's county so I come from the family of waterman, and we had boats and my uncles did charting at the sea. Fishing charting.

JN: Yes

JE: [20:40 – 20:43], and that could be for you. Because my uncle they did it, people loved that. They love coming to enjoy nature, going fishing and getting them food for some. So I can see that being something that could ever bring.

JN: Definitely. But the river, that could be clean. And if the river was clean, the fishing and the people are going to come. I used to go over there when I was 19, and I know what you are talking about. The piles of oysters, the shells, it was nice and it could have been the same here.

ED: Are you familiar with Speedway that used to be around here?

JN: Aquasco. I used to raised there.

JE: What?

JN: I've raised in Aquasco.

NW: What did you have?

JN: Chevelle. It was a grande 2 was the name of the Blue Chevelle. And we used to come down on a weekend, that place was, that and the surrounding area is like Wilmar's Park and all that, it was... had plenty of people here. And this raced track over here stayed for.

NW: Did you down with the numbers? What were your numbers?

JN: It was... I forget what it was right now, but it was getting there.

ED: Quarter mile, eight mile?

JN: Quarter mile. Yes. I think it was four, eight and a quarter. Something like that. I've forget. I used to pop the wheel with this thing until it was stolen. And I didn't had the money to do that all over again. But that place was nice.

ED: I brought that up because you spoke about having a place where they can do their four wheels and their bikes and things. You almost like restate the idea that bring back the old concept and that put in a new way. You have your rules, where they close at a certain time. The noise and... so it's.

JN: That place would be perfect.

ED: The history is making the Blue print of the future.

JN: That's a good idea. That would be perfect for too, because as loud as those vehicles were, you wouldn't even here go carts. That's a good idea.

ED: I don't have any more questions.

RD: I just want to speak about the store that you were speaking of, I'm in the process of trying to get that and just given in time. And I'm going to put down [23:32], used that as a [23:34] up right the street. And I'm speaking to the general owner, his name is also same as mine, Davis. And I'm speaking to him and just given time. Because that's what I feel is needed. When you come down and look around, you don't have anything to eat, nothing. And that I think is another thing, especially with the river right here, and you said catching fish and cleaning it up, so they were cooking that food. Something different, something fresh. Very few people have opportunity to eat something from the river that is fresh. And I think that's something that they'll like.

ED: I think, about getting up in the morning and getting breakfast. I'm a breakfast person, so I think those shops would be everywhere.

RD: And that's what we've been waiting for. That's we've been trying.

ED: I have no more questions for you sir.

JN: Okay.

ED: Appreciate you doing this.

JN: No problem.

JE: Thank you so much.

JN: There's no problem.

[End Transcript: 24:26]